

# The American Record Guide



TWENTY FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION



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# The American Record Guide

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THE AMERICAN TAPE GUIDE

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On the cover: Paul Paray, whose latest recording is reviewed on page 384.

I THINK Columbia was wise to back down in the matter of the "compatible" stereo disc. For all I know Columbia may, indeed, have developed one, but every engineer I know is convinced that true compatibility—that is, a recording playable monaurally or stereophonically and *equally* hi-fi either way—is still to be achieved. What is now possible, as I get it, is a disc that can be played either monaurally or stereophonically, all right, but with *circa* 1948 sound. Let's not go backwards, please. . . The prognosis for the immediate future would appear to be a prevalence of double releases. It seems to me that the only sensible answer for most collectors is simply to make their next cartridge one of the several mono-stereo jobs and thenceforth to buy stereo issues (when there is a choice), which I am assured will sound as good as any standard LP when played through monaural equipment. . . Phil Miller has come across a wonderful pair of articles written by W. J. Henderson in 1926. We will reprint them with Phil's commentary. . . Samuel Barber promises a piece on his "Vanessa" . . . If you think this issue is weighted in favor of vocal music, be apprised that six opera reviews had to be held over for lack of room. One of them is a longish feature on London's new "Arabella" by Robert Sabin, Senior Editor of *Musical America*. . . A sudden dearth of tapes and folk music, respectively, explains why these departments are missing this month. Both will be back directly, along with "Unlikely Corners". . . I hope that some company with Paris interests will have the sense to sign Leon Barzin, who is about to move there after twenty-five years with the National Orchestral Association in New York. He has the most fabulous stick technique I know of. Now, after half a lifetime of training young instrumentalists in an ever-changing ensemble, he will have a permanent one of his own (the Pasdeloup). Look for an immediate improvement in the playing of French orchestras. . . Speaking of the value of competition, collectors shortly will have no less than three new Berlioz Requiems (RCA Victor, Vanguard, and Westminster).

—J.L.

"...with releases like this the recording medium itself acquires a creative aspect."

## *Columbia introduces 'Moses and Aaron'*

WHILE the opera "*Moses und Aron*" unquestionably is not only the composer's masterpiece but also one of the great musical achievements of our century, it is hardly likely that we in this country will hear a live performance of this work in the foreseeable future. For Schönberg demands, in his uncompromising manner, an apparatus of immense scope, and also the work's musical texture is of the utmost complexity. As evidence of this, it has had only two performances since its composition in 1932! The first took place in concert form during 1954 at Hamburg, after literally months of preparation for which the Northwest German Radio supplied the financial resources. The original tapes for this recording were made at that performance. (The second, this time a stage production, was given in June of 1957 at the Zurich Opera House, also after innumerable rehearsals.) Columbia thus cannot be praised enough; with releases like this the recording medium itself acquires a creative aspect.

The informative booklet accompanying the album includes, in addition to the full text both in the original German and in an English translation, two extensive articles on the work. One, by Allen Forte, gives us the historical background and the dramatic plan of the opera, and also discusses its sonic organization. The other is an introduction to the music by Milton

Babbitt. Both writers address themselves more to professionals than to the larger public. Forte gives us a fair insight into the sonic relationships, but fails to consider the work's dramatic significance. Babbitt, on the other hand, limits himself to a thorough discussion of the twelve-tone system and analyzes in detail the various uses of the row technique throughout the score. These considerations hardly would be enough to make this opera the great creative achievement that it is. In the following I shall try to study the music from certain other viewpoints, consecutively from the dramatic angle, from the strictly musical, and from the combination as opera.

The text of "*Moses und Aron*", written by Schönberg himself, does not aim at presenting us with a representational picture of the great Biblical epic. In the author's conception, the protagonists are timeless symbols of the story of mankind. Moses personifies thought and ideal; his brother Aaron is the man of deed and action. The people, I think, could be any people at any time. They are shown us in various recognizable states—under oppression, in revolution, in liberation, and in the degradation of their materialistic orgies. Dramatically, the opera is tightly knit. It consists of two acts of three scenes each.

Act I, Scene I is entitled "The Calling of Moses". This is a dialogue between

By ABRAHAM SKULSKY

**SCHOENBERG:** "*Moses und Aron*"; Hans Herbert Fiedler (Moses), Helmut Krebs (Aaron), Ilona Steingruber-Wildgans (Young Girl), Ursula Zollenkops (Invalid Woman), Helmut Kretschmar (Young Man, Naked Youth), Horst Günter (Another Man), Hermann Rieth (Ephraimite, Priest), Dorothea Förster-Georgi, Carla Pfeffer-Düring, Anna Marie Tamm, and Charlotte Bettke (Four Naked Virgins), others, Choruses of the Hamburg Academy of Music and the Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Orchestra of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk conducted by Hans Rosbaud. Columbia set K3L-241, \$17.94.

Moses and the Voice from the burning bush (represented by singing and speaking choruses). In Scene II Moses meets Aaron in the wilderness, and the first dialogue between them ensues. Moses tries to convey his idea of God, which should be an ideal forever invisible and only to be expressed in words, while Aaron tries to argue that God, to be accepted, must be seen and felt. In Scene III, Moses and Aaron present themselves to the people, and at first they try to convince them of Moses' idealized conception of God. The people refuse to accept a God who refuses to be seen or felt, and prefer to stay in their present state of enslavement. Aaron then steps to the foreground, takes the rod from Moses' hands, and performs three miracles. He turns the rod into a snake, renders Moses' hand leprous, and turns the waters of the Nile into blood. This convinces the people; they revolt against

their oppressors and follow Moses and Aaron into the wilderness. An interlude for chorus and orchestra, in a continuous whispered manner, depicts the uneasiness of the people over Moses' absence.

Scene I of Act II begins with the Seventy Elders giving vent to their impatience at Moses' absence of forty days. The people and the Elders then insist that Aaron take over the leadership and give them another God. Aaron, reluctant at first, is then himself overtaken by doubt over Moses' fate: "Perhaps he has left us... perhaps his God has forsaken him... his God is severe, perhaps he has killed him... He then concedes to the people's demand and builds them the Golden Calf. There follows the barbaric scene of the Golden Calf, with its orgies of dancing and drunkenness, destruction, suicide, and eroticism. Schönberg's dramatic imagination knows no bounds in this scene and any presentation following



Act I, Scene III at the Zurich Opera

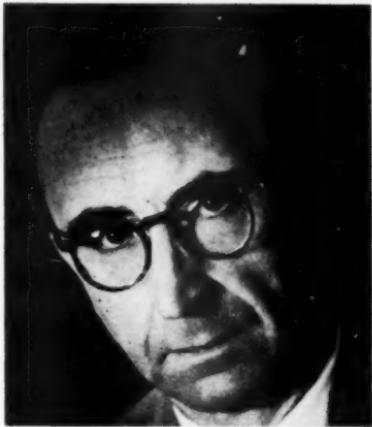
—Photo by W. E. Baur

the author's scenic demands is almost unimaginable. (There is even a comic note in this regard. At the entrance of the Four Naked Virgins before their blood sacrifice at the altar, Schönberg adds the following note in the score: "Naked to the extent that the rules and the necessities of the stage allow and require".) At the end of the orgies there is complete exhaustion. At this point Moses is seen descending from the mountain, carrying the Tables of the Law. Scene III, which follows immediately, consists of the second dialogue between Moses and Aaron over the God concept. Aaron has the upper hand here; when he points out that the Tables are themselves only an image of the word, Moses in anger destroys them. At the end, Moses exclaims: "O word, thou word, that I lack", and sinks to the ground in despair.

While these two acts constitute a well integrated unit, Schönberg never finished the work. In the third act, for which the text exists but no music, Aaron appears as a chained prisoner and again confronts Moses. Here the latter predominates, and Aaron to no avail tries to defend himself. When the soldiers ask Moses if they should kill Aaron, Moses replies: "Set him free, and if he can he shall live". When Aaron is freed, he stands up and then falls down dead.

Why Schönberg, during the nineteen remaining years of his life, never completed the opera, must remain forever a mystery. As indicated, however, the work does have a symbolic meaning even as it stands. For us the present ending, with the deed vanquishing the word, is true and normal. And I may venture the opinion that Schönberg, unconsciously perhaps, could not bring himself to compose the idealized third act because he did not see the factual realization in terms of our own time.

When we turn to the purely musical element of "Moses und Aron", it becomes quickly apparent that the twelve-tone system that constitutes the core of the work's organization is only one among many elements which contribute to its greatness. That the entire score is based on a single tone-row and its derivations is in itself no meager achieve-



Rosbaud: "the star of the performance..."

ment. What amazes more is the expressive quality of the source materials and the highly charged dramatic force which Schönberg accomplishes with them throughout. The fact is that in most of his previous works the twelve-tone row and its uses did, perhaps, constitute the principal element, while other materials were used either in a conventional manner or in a way that did not make them easily perceptible. However, in "Moses und Aron" all the musical elements contribute in an original manner, and with equal importance, to the expressive and dramatic demands of the whole. Thus the twelve-tone system becomes here a large structural framework within which both rhythmic and sonic invention unfold themselves with the utmost creative freedom.

In fact I am inclined to consider rhythm and sound the most astounding and original aspects of the work. While both of those elements are more frequently regarded as Stravinsky's exclusive property Schönberg not only meets him on his own ground but goes beyond it. This is nowhere more apparent than in the Golden Calf scene, which supersedes Stravinsky's *Le sacre* in barbaric intensity. Frenzied rhythms, march tempi, voluptuous erotic passages, and various sounds of the utmost extravagance follow each other in quick succession. In none of his other works did Schönberg express himself with such

inventive imagination. He also adopts Stravinskian sonic organization. Forte, in his notes, stresses the link between the dramatic content and the purely sonic aspect of the words, but forgets to state that this idea originated with Stravinsky in works like "*Renard*" and "*Les Noces*". I do not mean to say that Schönberg at any point derives from Stravinsky. Rather, I mean that at a certain point Schönbergian techniques meet elements of Stravinskian originality, just as Stravinsky nowadays uses row techniques in his own manner.

Another point one must consider in the music of the opera is the huge apparatus used by Schönberg, both orchestrally and vocally. Using those forces in a very sparing manner allowed Schönberg a dynamic range of enormous variety. Thus one finds passages of the utmost delicacy like the whispered interlude, and others of the utmost dramatic intensity, like the entire scene of the revolt. One will notice the most involved contrapuntal sections and, at other times, a single expressive line comprising the entire fabric, as at the very end of the opera. The sharpest contrasts occur in the climactic Golden Calf scene.

When we study the work from the viewpoint of opera *per se*, we must come to the conclusion that Schönberg has created a new operatic form. What the composer did, actually, was to combine in one score all the existing forms of operatic writing. There is first a new conception of the aria-recitativo form. The role of Moses is spoken throughout (with one small exception) and can be regarded as the recitativo element. That of Aaron is sung by a tenor, and stands out for its lyricism and continual melodic flow; it is indeed one long, sustained aria. During the greatest part of the opera the roles of Moses and Aaron are superimposed, so that recitativo and aria occur simultaneously. The same thing happens in many of the choral passages, where singing chorus and speaking chorus are superimposed in contrapuntal fashion. The entire first scene is built that way. The constant variation technique of the

twelve-tone system replaces in a sense the Wagnerian *Leitmotiv* idea and creates at the same time the continuous music drama as originated by Wagner. In addition, the large conception of the many ensemble scenes gives the work a definite place in what I would call the opera of the masses, of which "*Boris*" and Milhaud's "*Christophe Colomb*" are significant examples.

Finally, the grandly conceived Golden Calf scene could well be defined as an amplification of the dramatic ballet form. By combining in a single work all the various functions of operatic structures, Schönberg emerges as the most important renovator of our century in the operatic medium. Principally, he found a means of doing away with the distinct functions of recitativo and aria by combining them. And if one could find an appropriate expression for the twelve-tone system as applied to operatic procedures, then I would say that Schönberg coined it. The novelty of Schönberg's approach can best be seen if we compare it to that of his pupil Alban Berg. The latter, although using a new musical language, did turn back when it came to his operatic technique. In "*Wozzeck*" he uses old symphonic structures and in "*Lulu*" purely vocal ones, which of course does not diminish the great value of both those operas. All in all I can only disagree with annotator Forte when he classifies "*Moses und Aaron*" somewhat rudimentarily as "religious drama". It may contain religious elements, but it adds up to infinitely more than that. It has social and philosophical aspects aside from its purely voluptuous beauties of sound.

One has to take cognizance of two important factors before appraising the quality of this performance. First, the present recording of the work was not made under ideal studio conditions. It was recorded at a public broadcast. Some extraneous noises are therefore heard, and others that should be are not. While the star of the performance is undoubtedly conductor Hans Rosbaud, who is well

(Continued on page 410)

## Schumann's (and Byron's) *Manfred*

By JOHN W. BARKER

FOR ALL the deserved popularity of the superb Overture, the rest of Schumann's Incidental Music, Op. 115, to Byron's *Manfred* has received scant attention in concert halls (though it has been done occasionally, including once in 1869 by the old New York Philharmonic with Edwin Booth reading the part of the hero), and thus far none on records. Now Columbia brings us not only Schumann's score, but also the Byron play in one two-disc set. At first thought this might seem discouraging to the music-lover who wants to hear the score and resents having to wade through many words to get it. But a complete hearing of this set will vindicate the coupling. For Schumann intended that many of the numbers should be thoroughly integrated with the text, and to separate them is to deprive the music of much of its point.

If, for better or worse, the music is firmly wedded to the poetry, it is then understandable why the full score has suffered neglect: *Manfred*, with or without music, is not a work which can really be staged successfully. It usually re-

**BYRON-SCHUMANN:** *Manfred, Dramatic Poem with Incidental Music, Op. 115*; George Rylands (Manfred), Jill Balcon (Witch and Astarte), Raf de la Torre (Nemesis and Spirit), Laidman Browne (Spirit and Abbott), and David Enders (Chamois Hunter and Servant); Gertrude Holt (soprano), Claire Duchesneau (contralto), Niven Miller (tenor), Glyndwr Davies (baritone), Ian Billington (bass), the B.B.C. Chorus and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set M2L-245, four sides, \$7.96.

mains a reader's drama, which obviously does not do the music any good. Byron wrote the work in 1817 at the age of twenty-nine. Two things are generally agreed about it. First, that the hero is primarily a self-portrayal, with his tortured and guilty longing for the departed Astarte reflecting the poet's own more-than-brotherly affection for his half-sister Augusta. Second, that the play is barely a play at all, since it has virtually no action or development; it is rather a long, romantically philosophical poem in dramatic form. As such it is eminently suited to the medium of recording, particularly when it can be supplemented with the added aural dimension of music.

Just how much the subject of *Manfred*, with its reminiscences of Goethe's *Faust* (to which Schumann also devoted his attentions) and its clear delineation of the typical "Byronesque hero" excited the hyper-romantic composer has been recorded by his wife. By November of 1848 he had completed the score, which as originally constituted includes the famous Overture and fifteen numbers. No. 1 is a song for four (instead of Byron's original seven) Spirits in Act I, Scene 1, scored for soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass solos. No. 2 is an orchestral movement for the first "melodrama" called "Appearance of a Magic Form". No. 3 is the Incantation which concludes Scene 1, for four basses and orchestra. No. 4 is simply a few tunes on the English horn to accompany the appearance of the Chamois Hunter. Act II is preceded by No. 5, an attractive Entr'acte for the orchestra. No. 6 accompanies another melodrama occurring in Act II, Scene 2, when Manfred invokes the Witch of the Alps; the orchestral writing is distinctly reminiscent of Berlioz' *Queen Mab Scherzo*. No. 7 is the Hymn of the Spirits in praise of Arimanes which opens Scene 4, for chorus (SSATB) and orchestra in the most massive and grotesque style Schumann could muster. Nos. 8 and 9 are two very short choral outbursts of the Spirits of Arimanes' court as they threaten Manfred for his intrusion; and appended to No. 9 is a



Composer and poet: "for better or worse... firmly wedded"

little cadence to accompany the "Yea" from Arimanes. Nos. 10 and 11 are two more melodramas, respectively the summoning of the shade of Astarte and Manfred's piteous pleas to the shade. The second part of No. 11 is an'orchestral section which closes Act II and is in effect an *entr'acte*. Act III is opened with No. 12, another melodrama, for Scene 1, an instrumental accompaniment to a monologue of Manfred's for a reduced orchestra. No. 13 also is a melodrama, with orchestral accompaniment to Manfred's Farewell to the Sun. No. 14 is music for yet another melodrama in Scene 4, during which the Abbott and Manfred encounter the Spirit who comes to summon Manfred to his death. And No. 15 is the Final Scene, the "Cloister Song" in which the chorus sings the opening lines of the *Requiem* as a background for the death of Manfred.

Beecham's recording offers a few departures from the original score. In No. 4, instead of using the stipulated four basses, Beecham employs a tenor, a baritone, and a bass; but even this does no actual violence to the music. The end of No. 4, a brief reprise of one of the Hunter's tunes for English Horn, is omitted, a trifle indeed. Stranger is the complete omission (save for Arimanes' "Yea" of No. 9), which, while a small loss, is nevertheless hardly justifiable in view of the particular brevity of side three. It is in Act III, however, that this recording takes the greatest liberties. Schumann himself greatly abbreviated Byron's original text, not only cutting out many lines in sections he set vocally, but reducing monologues and dropping out large pas-

sages including Scenes 1 and 3 of Act II. But Schumann never designated that Scene 2 of Act II should precede Scene 1 as done here. Moreover, in abbreviating Scene 1 this recording omits entirely the monologue of No. 12; and the music for this is transplanted to accompany an entirely different monologue at the beginning of Scene 4. Similar liberty is taken with the music in other parts of the play. Whole orchestral sections are used, not only in their proper places but also to accompany passages Schumann left unaccompanied; for example, the last section (the "*entr'acte*") of No. 11, is used also to supplement No. 6 in the beginning (Scene 2 in Byron's original) of Act II, and similar tricks are played in Scene 1 of Act I. Or else, music already written to accompany a scene or monologue is fudged out to support far more of the spoken text than Schumann originally intended.

This freedom with the score raises a fundamental question concerning this music. One of Schumann's chief concerns was with the "melodramas" as effective blending of music and the spoken word. He even went so far in Nos. 14 and 15 as to write down in the score specific rhythmic notation for some of the lines. (One may or may not choose to see in this a foreshadowing of the line of development to culminate in Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*.) But there are definite drawbacks to this aim. For one thing, what Schumann set was not Byron's original but rather a German translation after Böttger and Posgarn; the fact that the original English words can be fitted to the music without any serious wrenching of

(Continued on page 390)

# Record Reviews

**T**HERE IS IN SOULS *a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.*

—William Cowper

**ARLEN:** "Blues Opera"—Suite; Andre Kostelanetz and his orchestra. Columbia CL-1099, \$3.98.

▲THIS suite, comprising seventeen selections chosen from the still-to-be-produced "Blues Opera", was arranged and orchestrated by Samuel Matlowsky; it is a

Arlen, at keyboard, with Kostelanetz



**J. S. BACH:** *Two- and Three-Part Inventions*; Alexander Borovsky (piano); Vox PL-10.550, \$4.98.

▲ON the credit side is the tight discourse. The allusions are much better outlined when the dynamic plane is not sent on a zig-zag course, as so often occurs with pianists when they play Bach. The neutrality of such a performance as Borovsky gives is not an artistic truce between musical virtue and vice, but is clearly the mark of the person who trusts

rich sampling of a powerful, melodious, score and it promises much for the opera itself. Included are well-known songs (remembered from "St. Louis Woman", which served as the base for "Blues Opera") such as *Come Rain or Come Shine, Any Place I Hang My Hat is Home, I Had Myself A True Love*, and *One For My Baby*. The lesser-known ones used are tasteful also: the poignant *Dis Little While* (which is heard for a mere two bars, just preceding another fine song, *I Wonder What Became of Me?*), and the exquisite *Minuet* (this just preceding the racing call). The closing spiritual, *Leavin' Time*, is quite stirring. Kostelanetz conducts with a firm hand and generates much excitement; the orchestra responds with surprising alertness to the rhythms of popular music. Some particularly brilliant passages are contributed by pianist Leonid Hambro. —E.J.

in Bach. Further credits: very beautiful sound, an excellent liner note (by Joseph Braunstein). On the other side of the ledger is a monotonous sense of pace; there must be particulars of change in tempi as acute (or as subtle) as the key shifts. And this does not equal a transcriptional device. Further debits: here and there, but especially in the fifth of the three-part set, the mordents are misread, and some trills inserted for which one doubts authenticity. —A.C.

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**BARRAUD:** *Offrande à une ombre*; **RAVEL:** *Ma Mère l'Oye*; **CHABRIER:** *Bourrée fantasque*; **ROUssel:** *Suite in F*; Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Paray. Mercury MG-50145, \$4.98.

(Ravel) Koussevitzky, Boston.....RCA Victor LM-1012  
Guilini, Phil.....Angel 35462

▲MERCURY has put together a French concert of uncommon appeal. What is more, this is literature in all of which Paray evinces distinctive insights and a telling identification. Of particular interest are the racy Roussel Suite (which, with this release, returns to the LP catalogue), and the intensely searching Barraud tone poem that here receives its first recorded performance. Although the tart wit of Roussel offers delight, it is the Barraud which engages one's emotions with compelling candor. Written as an elegy to Maurice Jaubert (himself a composer) and Barraud's own brother Jean—both of whom died at the hands of the Gestapo—it made a deep impression on this listener. Dramatic respite is provided by an infectious reading of Chabrier's jaunty *Bourrée fantasque*. The plaintive charms of Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye* have not been presented more persuasively by any living conductor. The program is better balanced than the sound, but the readings are uniformly excellent. Recommended. —A.K.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Leonore Overture No. 3*, Op. 72a; *Egmont Overture*, Op. 84;

**BRAHMS:** *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81;

*Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80;

New York Philharmonic conducted by

Bruno Walter. Columbia ML-5232, \$3.98.

▲THE esteemed Walter delivers nothing less than an object lesson on how these works should be played. His concepts fall midway between the hair-trigger rhythmic and dynamic intensity of Toscanini and the elasticity of Furtwängler, with a slight tinge of the Viennese tradition subtly applied in the elegance of phrasing and in the orchestral sonorities evoked. The two Brahms performances have made their appearance before (the *Academic Festival* in the now extinct Columbia 10"

series and more recently coupled with the Third Symphony, the *Tragic* in a pairing with the Double Concerto and the *Haydn Variations*), but the Beethoven performances are new. The sonics are full-bodied and clear. —A.K.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor*, Op. 27, No. 2 (*Moonlight*); *Sonata No. 26 in E flat*, Op. 81a (*"Les Adieux"*); *Sonata No. 24 in F sharp*, Op. 78; *Sonata No. 23 in F minor*, Op. 57 (*"Appassionata"*); Robert Casadesus (piano). Columbia ML-5233, \$3.98.

▲CASADESUS' acute comprehension of Beethoven's stylistic values is nothing new, nor is his ability to get at the heart of the musical meaning. Here he is, for the most part, in top form. All the performances are highly recommended with only one slight reservation: the middle movement of the *Appassionata* warrants a greater measure of inner repose than is supplied here. Columbia has cleverly coupled less familiar fare with two popular stand-bys. The piano sound tends toward blandness. An annoying surface hiss pervades the entirety. —A.K.

**BRUCH:** *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor*, Op. 26; **LALO:** *Symphonie Espagnole*, Op. 21; David Oistrakh (violin), Alexander Gauk conducting the National Philharmonic Orchestra (Bruch), Kiril Kondrashin conducting the National Philharmonic Orchestra (Lalo). Bruno BR-14003, \$3.98.

(Bruch) D. Oistrakh, Matacic, London Sym....Angel 35243  
(Lalo) D. Oistrakh, Martinon, Philh.....Angel 35205

▲IF these were the only available recordings of both concertos by David Oistrakh, and if there were very little chance that he might remake them in the future, I would unhesitatingly say that this disc must be obtained, for his performances are phenomenal. Because he has made more recent recordings of the same works (the present versions are the same as those released some time ago on the Colosseum label), this pressing must be considered as completely superfluous. Oistrakh's Angel performances



A scroll of the Yedo period, showing a lion-dancer on the main thoroughfare of old Kyoto

**BRITTON:** *Japanese Sketches (Tokyo Impressions; Yedo Fantasy)*; Shin Ensemble of Tokyo conducted by Ikuma Dan. Capitol T-10123, \$3.98.

▲MY enthusiasm for this release knows no bounds. No one who has ever visited Japan—indeed, no one who has been charmed by the wonderful Japanese films in recent years—could fail to be utterly captivated by Dorothy Guyver Britton's translation of the koto-samisen esthetic into occidental terms. Both of these scores sound like a Japanese film track; the latter one actually is. The former, especially got up for this recording, in-

cludes a serenade by fireflies especially taped on the banks of the Sumida for interpolation herewith. But the verisimilitude is quite complete in the music, the instrumentation of which enlists, in addition to the usual, a real Kabuki drum, a pair of *hyoshigi* clappers, and at least one bamboo *sho* pipe for the last measure of authenticity. The cover photo, by Capitol executive Glenn E. Wallich, is an adorable study of youngsters being fascinated by what seems to be some carnival attraction. The performances were taped in Tokyo, but the sound is on a par with Capitol's best domestic recordings. —J.L.

are the equal of his interpretations on the Bruno disc, and the recording quality is infinitely better. The sound here is, to put it as kindly as possible, dreadful. There are absolutely no highs in the Bruch, and whereas the Lalo may boast a slightly wider frequency range the sound there is pinched and most unpleasant to the ear. Avoid. —I.K.

**CHERUBINI:** "Medea"—*Dei tuoi figli la madre*; **SPONTINI:** "La Vestale"—*Tu che invoco con orrore; O nome tutelar; Caro oggetto*; **BELLINI:** "Puritan"!—*O rendetemi la speme; Qui la voce sua soave* (with Panerai and Rossi-Lemeni); "Sonnambula"—*Care compagne*; Maria Meneghini Callas (soprano) with the La Scala Orchestra conducted by Tullio Serafin and Antonino Votto. Angel 35034, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲THE long scene from "Medea" and the three from "La Vestale" are new; those

from "Puritan" and "Sonnambula" on the reverse appear to be excerpted from the complete opera recordings. The "Medea" might be taken as a preview of the forthcoming record of that famous but little known work, but for the fact that it will be released on the Mercury label, not the Angel. It promises to be one of the really exciting opera issues of the year. If I say La Callas is in top form throughout this recital, my opinion will be variously interpreted, according to the personal reactions of the reader, for this soprano is not one opera fans can take or leave alone. The peculiar quality of the voice, which some find unsympathetic, is in characteristic shape; those to whom it does appeal will revel in her ever intelligent and musical use of it. There is undeniably some acidity in the upper part of it, but for myself I find it mostly quite beautiful in this recording. Her singing of the "Medea" is genuinely exciting and utterly convincing as a realization of the

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character she is supposed to represent, though some of the music lies high for her. In the "Vestale" Callas inevitably invokes comparisons with Ponselle, though she gives us considerably more of the music than did Rosa. This is certainly no such magnificent outpouring of tone as we know in the older record, nor does Callas treat the music altogether in the Ponselle manner, but again I find her vital and convincing. The "Puritani" always seemed to me one of her fortunate recordings, and though I care less for the "Sorinambula", I have little fault to find with this excerpt. Whatever else one may say, the Callas singing is neat and true.

—P.L.M.

•  
**DUKE:** *Souvenir de Monte-Carlo*; **COBERT:** *Mediterranean Suite*; M-G-M Orchestra conducted by Carlos Surinach and Robert Cobert. M-G-M E-3497, \$3.98.

▲THE composer Vernon Duke, né Vladimir Dukelsky, has for years been leading a double life. Famous for such songs as *April in Paris*, he also tries his hand from time to time in serious music, which he claims is in no way related stylistically to his popular output. *Souvenir de Monte-Carlo* is an example of Duke's "classical" writing. Repeated hearings have not convinced me that this is good music without regard to genre. The orchestration is weak and the ideas anemic. Cobert's *Mediterranean Suite* is an unpretentious and entertaining work. There is a feeling of sincerity in this unashamedly "light" music which I miss in the Duke. Good performances. Rather dry sound, but clean.

—D.H.M.

**GLAZUNOV:** *Birthday Offering*; **LECOQC:** *Mam'zelle Angot*; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Robert Irving. Angel 35588, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲PROPERLY, the credits should read Glazunov-Irving and Lecocq-Jacob. The former hyphenation is a one-scene *divertissement* choreographed by Frederick Ashton for the Silver Jubilee of Sadler's Wells (now The Royal Ballet). Irving drew willy-nilly from *The Seasons*, *Scènes de ballet*, *Ruses d'amour*, and various concert and recital works by Glazunov. The arrangement is quintessentially balletic. So is Gordon Jacob's synthesis of "*La Fille de Madame Angot*", although it differs quite substantially from the ever bubbling version by Richard Mohaupt (Columbia ML-4083, now withdrawn). Some mystery surrounds the latter, incidentally. The old Ballet Theatre programs list Efrem Kurtz as arranger of the music for Leonid Massine's original 1943 production, then entitled *Mademoiselle Angot*. And yet the jacket of the aforementioned recording, under Kurtz himself, identifies Mohaupt as the orchestrator. Anyhow, it is clear enough that Massine's 1947 London production, rechristened in the vernacular, had an entirely new score by Jacob, and this is it. Chiefly its departures from the Mohaupt counterpart represent, respectively, the differences between a typical British situation ballet, with interludes of static formality, and a typical week-end closing ballet, American-style, with a laugh a minute. Balletomanes will be grateful for this release and others should be too. Irving is without a peer in this repertory.

and the perfect playing he elicits is stunningly recorded.

—J.L.

**GOEB:** *Symphony No. 3; B. WEBER: Symphony on Poems of William Blake;* Warren Galjour (baritone, in the latter) with an orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Composers Recordings CRI-120, \$4.98.

▲NEITHER of these performances is new to LP, but they have not been around for some time and it is good to have them back—the Goeb because it is a strong piece and Ben Weber's because it has earned the respect of serious musicians and also because twelve-tone music is not otherwise fairly represented in the catalogues. For all its careful coloration I still find it dreary listening. However, it is at least a personal expression, which cannot be said of many works in this idiom. Goeb's Symphony is not built on very possessing melodic material, but it is distinguished for its vigorous unfoldment and eschewal of orchestrational clichés. I like it. The performances are absolutely first-class, as one always expects from Stokowski when he addresses himself to the moderns. To avoid confusion, it should be noted that the Goeb appeared originally on RCA Victor LM-1727 (with the Bartók Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion), the Weber on RCA Victor LM-1785 (with Lou Harrison's Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra, the latter having been reissued on CRI-114). These performances were sponsored by the American Composers Alliance in the first place, apparently with the understanding that the master tapes would revert to ACA (which supports CRI) after they had enjoyed the advantages of the RCA imprimatur for a prescribed time. ACA is due the gratitude of all open-eared listeners for renewing its earlier advocacy. In this kind of repertory, simple availability is the most important thing.

—J.L.

**GOLDMARK:** *Concerto in A minor;* Nathan Milstein (violin) with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Harry Blech. Capitol PAO-8414, \$4.98.

(Continued on page 390)



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Madman or "uomo universale"?

#### Musical murderer

## The daring Don Carlo Gesualdo

By MAX SERBIN

**The Madrigals and Sacred Music of Don Carlo Gesualdo:** *Aestimatus sum* (Response); *Mille volte il di moro* (Book VI); *Ascinate i begli occhi* (Book V); *do parto e non pin dissi* (Book VI); *Se la mia morte brami* (Book VI); *Belta poi che t' assenti* (Book VI); *Ancor che per amarti* (Book VI); *O dolce mio tesoro* (Book VI); *Te piangi o Fille mia* (Book VI); *Tu m'uccidi O crudele* (Book V); *Moro, e mentre sospiro* (Book IV); *S'io non miro non moro* (Book V); *Deh! come in van sospiro* (Book VI); *Tristes est anima mea* (Response); Grace-Wynne Martin (soprano), Marilynne Horne (mezzo-soprano), Cora Lauridsen (contralto), Richard Robinson (tenor), Paul Salamunovitch (tenor), Howard Chittman (baritone), Charles Scharbach (bass), conducted by Robert Craft. Columbia ML-5234, \$3.98.

Singgemeinschaft Lamy..... Decca ARC-3073  
Singers of Ferrara..... Sunset 600

**R**EMEMBER "A madman's madrigals"? This was the "lure" in an advertisement of some years ago referring to the music of Don Carlo Gesualdo. Concerning Schumann's or Wolf's compositions, one could allude with more veracity, if equally deplorable taste, to "a madman's symphonies" or "a madman's songs". But this kind of purple writing does a great disservice to the genius of Gesualdo.

The sixteenth century probably was the most remarkable single period in man's cultural history. It was an age of great extremes—new scientific thought, daring

exploration, and gross sensuality. Murder, deceit, and other attributes of immorality were all parts of the way of life, and Machiavelli could well state: "We Italians are irreligious and corrupt above others." In Italy, especially, much store was put on "honor", a concept which could be a force for constructive deeds or hideous destruction. This was also a period in which great men tended to excel in many things ("l'uomo universale"), the perfect archetype being, of course, Leonardo Da Vinci. Artists, composers, and poets, evincing wide cultural and scientific interests, developed highly individual and eclectic personalities.

Only against this complex, colorful tapestry can the life and work of Gesualdo be judged.

Don Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, was born in 1560 at Naples and died there at the age of fifty-three. The known facts of his life, apart from the daring innovations he created in music, have given him a rather violent reputation. Having murdered his wife for infidelity—and later his child, when he suspected the infant's paternity—Gesualdo admittedly is difficult to understand in the light of our own precepts. But his character is comprehensible when viewed against the sixteenth-century notion of "honor" in southern Italy.

It is his music we are concerned with, however, and not his private life. In the year 1600, composers generally were intrigued with the problems of drama in relation to music. Their unbounded admiration for the Greek theater led them into uncharted courses, one of which led to the founding of opera and another to the exploitation of harmony as a means of personal expression. Among these ex-

perimenters, Monteverdi surely stands highest in a group which included many, many remarkable figures. Gesualdo could not help but be affected by the musical activity that swirled about him, but he chose the older madrigal forms in which to create the most startling harmonic innovations ever penned—equaled in their audacity only in another period, perhaps, by Debussy.

The great Italian poets Ariosti and Tasso constantly depicted emotion, and Gesualdo was highly sensitive and responsive to their poetry, especially where it depicted sorrow, happiness, or pain. In reflecting these emotions the composer utilized extreme and unprepared dissonances. It must be emphasized that his use of dissonance was a means of underlining the poetic text and not mere radical experimentation. Also to be taken into account is the fact that music during Gesualdo's youth was still in the bonds of modal tonality, distinguished by continuity of style and held together by its contrapuntal texture. Contrariwise, early baroque music is disconnected internally, although composers persisted in naming their choral music "madrigals".

In other words, in the wake of the Renaissance conventional forms were still written but in a new stylistic idiom. Eventually, the older forms were destroyed, and new molds were invented that were more in keeping with the new idiom. Gesualdo, through his use of iridescent and realistic harmony, helped to destroy the madrigal. He is Janus-faced, then, looking back but facing the future.

In 1594, the court of Ferrara was one of the most brilliant cultural centers in Italy, rivaling even Rome and Florence. Gesualdo resided there, no doubt stimulated by the visits of previous composers like Willaert, Des Prez, and Palestrina. He must have been in favor because he remarried, choosing a member of the family of the reigning Duke Alfonso II. Later he returned to Naples, and gave himself up to music for the rest of his life. This recording represents a cross-section of his works.

Madrigal singing is not embedded in our musical mores, and for the most part it

has been limited to college choir concerts, where it is earnestly done but overblown and inaccurate. Moreover, while most singers in this country are trained in the Italian style, suitable for opera and ballad, their voices sound horribly exaggerated in contrapuntal music. So it is to be hoped that Robert Craft will make other recordings of early choral music with these forces. My only objection to the recording is in its being strictly a cappella. It should have some doubling of the vocal lines by strings, bass, or any other instruments historically consonant. It gives a misleading, black-and-white picture of the music of the period. I doubt that a cappella singing was heard much in 1600, for it was then the universal practice to double voices with instrumental color, even in the churches. This and other minor objections notwithstanding, I must recommend the release for its great intrinsic interest.

—M.S.

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▲LAST September, reviewing Milstein's recordings of the Dvořák and Glazunov Concerti, I remarked on the advisability of taping his performance of the Goldmark, which he had been playing up and down the concert circuit. Praise be, Capitol has obliged, and now let any captious critic dare to denigrate the

worthiness of this work, either as a virtuoso vehicle or as music *per se*. The dourdest defender of baroque felicities will have to admit that this is music-making of an order that demands respect and, moreover, lends the aspects of a masterpiece to Goldmark's unashamedly schmaltzy score. I recommend this release with no reservations whatever. For what it is, it is perfect.

—J.L.

either is still no negation of the dangers of setting a translation. Far more serious, however, is the general difficulty of matching the rhythms and sonorities of such diverse elements as a speaking voice and instrumental music. It is on this basis that many critics have explained the score's lack of success. The fact that Beecham's recording can play so fast and loose with these musical accompaniments to speech may be used to demonstrate either the weakness or the flexibility of Schumann's aim. But if it does show that this aim was not precisely achieved (i.e., the association of particular words with particular music) one cannot deny that Schumann's lovely music often does distinctly point up and enhance the poetic illusions.

For all the liberties thus taken with Schumann's intentions the essential effect is conveyed. The dependence of many of the numbers upon the poetic contexts may limit them as independent music, but while only the first *Entr'acte* (No. 5) is anywhere near the quality of the overture there is much beauty in this score. All our waiting has not been in vain. Beecham's interpretations are carefully and effectively presented, although one can make no absolute judgment on his handling of the bulk of the score in the absence of any opportunities for comparison. The magnificent Overture, however, has long been with us, justly regarded as one of the composer's very greatest works. The standard for performance so far has generally been set by the tautly intense conception of Tosca-

nini—who strangely enough has done the same thing for Tchaikovsky's *Manfred*—now available on Victor's LM-9022. Beecham's approach is utterly different, but by no means invalid. His deft understatement does not necessarily destroy the longing, soaring, surging romanticism of the music; it is not so exciting as Toscanini's way, but this greater introspection reveals a new depth. In the other numbers, finally, the vocal performers are all commendable and the chorus does its bit well. The recorded sound is fine, although one might wish for a little more clarity in the middle ranges.

Amid all the interest in Schumann's music, at least one half of the attention, in interest as well as time, must remain with Byron. This is certainly beautiful poetry, and this capable cast of actors reads the lines with admirable clarity. But for those who really want to appreciate the poem, this release has one great and absolutely indefensible weakness: no text is provided, so that one has no idea of the structure of the drama or of the sequence of the musical numbers except what is given vaguely in the inadequate notes on the sleeve. Anyone who wants to follow the text will have to dig out a copy of the Byron original and will then go wild trying to find his way amid all the cuts and omissions, as I did.

Otherwise, the set is a considerable achievement. The net result is perhaps as close as one can come in effect to Schumann's original intentions, and may give his score a life it has never enjoyed. Now then, how about his *Faust* music, and maybe even "*Genoveva*" or *The Paradise and the Peri*?

*Yet another, but  
by far the finest,  
'Israel in Egypt'*

GOING from one misfortune to another through three successive recordings it seemed as if this, one of Handel's most stupendously great works, was hexed. Despite the unspeakable abominations of Sargent's version, the appearance of this third recording might well have marked the saturation point for the market. But the spell is happily broken by Westminster with Abravanel, whose *Judas Maccabaeus* once graced the old Handel Society catalogue (HDL-12).

Let it be stated at the outset that this new recording has two limitations. First, it is not complete: of the thirty-nine numbers four are omitted. No. 32, the contralto and tenor duet "Thou in Thy mercy", is frequently left out of concert performances, but this is no excuse. No. 26, the wonderful "stubble" chorus,

**HANDEL:** *Israel in Egypt*; Blanche Christensen, Colleen Bischoff (sopranos), Grace Bumbry (alto), Dale Blackburn (tenor), Don Watts, Warren Wood (basses), Alexander Schreiner (organ), Ardeen Watts (harpsichord), Combined Choruses of the University of Utah, the Utah Symphony conducted by Maurice Abravanel. Westminster set XWL-2224, four sides, \$10.95.

Goehr.....Handel Society HDL-1  
Koch.....Bach Guild BG-521/2  
Sargent.....Angel 3550

"Thou sentest forth Thy wrath", and No. 31, "The earth swallow'd them", are both fugal double choruses which follow introductory choruses that are left up in the air by themselves (a fault which Sargent carries to such extremes). And finally No. 11, the fine chorus "Egypt was glad", is a serious loss.

There is no great shortage of record space to justify these cuts, and the only defense given in Herbert Weinstock's otherwise excellent notes is that the sections omitted are ones the composer took over *in toto* from other works. If this kind of reasoning prevailed generally, what would become of many of Handel's works, not to mention those of other composers such as, for example, Bach's *B minor Mass*? It is enough of a pity that recording companies undertake major projects

Exodus 14:15-16—And the Lord said unto Moses. . . "lift thou up thy rod"



and then do not see them through consistently; but must they then justify themselves with such musicalological casuistry? Ironically, the principle given as the basis of this performance is violated at the very outset by prefacing the work, which has no overture of its own, with the brief *Introduction to the Funeral Anthem* for Queen Caroline—simply because Handel included a version of that whole piece in the program of the first performance of *Israel* in 1739.

The second limitation of this new version is the weakness of the vocal soloists. It is perhaps natural that in an oratorio so remarkably dominated by its choruses (twenty-eight of the thirty-nine numbers are all or mainly choral), the solo sections should be handled with less concern. Still, this is unfortunate, for the airs and duets contain some attractive as well as difficult music. The soloists here are apparently local talent and in general they are just not up to their roles. The tenor, in his four recitatives and one air, is the only one who seems to have caught the spirit of things; the others grit their teeth and, taking themselves all too seriously, turn out performances which on the whole leave something to be desired.

These limitations aside, however, it is the highest praise to be able to say that this performance is at its best in the work's most important aspect, the choruses. Abravanel plainly has a strong feeling for this music. He handles "But as for his people" with a fine phrasing that gives this chorus a shape and life it has received from few others. His tempi are crisp and incisive, with a thrilling sense of staccato. As a result, the mighty choruses roll, roar, stamp, flow, and thunder in all their glorious majesty. The orchestra is kept within proper size and gives ideal accompaniment. Westminster provides excellent recording sound, although clearer enunciation by the chorus might have been achieved with closer miking. And yet the over-all is quite stunning. Abravanel may yet prove to be the Handel conductor we so sorely need; let us hope that Westminster is planning with him a series of Handel oratorios, shamefully neglected so far, with an eye towards the coming bicentenary of the composer's death next year. As for this present set, while it may fall a bit short of perfection, it brings this magnificent work to life for the first time on records, and as such is heartily recommended.

—J.W.B.

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**HAYDN:** *Harpsichord Concerti in F and C*; Helma Elsner (harpsichord); Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra, Stuttgart, conducted by Rolf Reinhardt(?). Vox PL-10300, \$4.98.

Veyron-Lacroix, (F).....Westminster XWN-18042

▲BOTH these pieces are pleasant and ingratiating, perhaps the *C major* even more so than its partner, and these performances are in the solid and earnest tradition set by these musicians in their current Haydn Concerto series. The total amount of music on this disc is rather skimpy since the *C major* runs less than fifteen minutes, though it takes up the entire second side; a more economical offering of the *F major* is made by Westminster in the company of two other pieces. A few minor fumbles mark the listings of performers here: for no reason whatsoever, since he has no solo passages, the violinist Reinhold Barchet is given

star billing on the label of side one and on the jacket, front and back; then, while the label on both sides and the front of the jacket give the conductor as Rolf Reinhardt, the back of the jacket oddly gives Michael Gielen the baton honors. The recording sound is close, but not excessively so.

—J.W.B.

**HOPKINS:** *Rooms*; Teo Macero (tenor saxophone), Bart Wallace (trumpet), Wendal Marshall (double bass), Clem Da Rosa (percussion), and Dick Collins (piano), conducted by Kenyon Hopkins. Cadence CLP-1019, \$3.98.

▲MODERN dance-oriented listeners will need no urging to acquire this disc, which offers the complete score for Anna Sokolow's powerful and popular *Rooms*. The work is much more than a "piquant casserole", as the annotator rather peculiarly describes it. And elsewhere he exposes

his ignorance of the subject with statements just as wild, but never mind because now we have the music anyhow. To those of us who have seen the production it is clear that Kenyon's score is impeccably tailored to Miss Sokolow's choreography, whatever this fellow implies to the contrary, and that is the principal virtue of this release. The composer having supervised the performance, it is presumably all that he desires. The engineering is excellent.

—J.L.

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**Italian Classical Symphonists, Vol. I**—**BOCCHERINI**: *Symphony in F*; **BRUNETTI**: *Symphony in G minor*; *Symphony in C minor*; **SAMMARTINI**: *Symphony in G*, Italian Chamber Orchestra conducted by Newell Jenkins. Haydn Society HS-9019, \$4.98.

**Italian Classical Symphonists, Vol. II**—**VIOTTI**: *Concerto in E flat* for piano and violin; **SAMMARTINI**: *Oboe Concerto in F*; **ALBINONI**: *Concerto for Orchestra in D minor*; **SARTI**: *Concertone per più strumenti obbligati*; **GEMINIANI-CORELLI**: *Concerto Grosso No. 2*; Carlo Bussotti (piano), Antonio Abussi (violin), Sidney Gallesi (oboe), Italian Chamber Orchestra conducted by Newell Jenkins. Haydn Society HS-9027, \$4.98.

**Italian Classical Symphonists, Vol. III—ROSETTI**: *Horn Concerto in E flat*; **GIORDANI**: *Piano Concerto in C*; **VALENTINI**: *Oboe Concerto in C*; **SAMMARTINI**: *Violin Concerto in C*; Pasqualino Rossi (horn), Silvano Prestini (oboe), Bussotti, Abussi, Italian Chamber Orchestra conducted by Newell Jenkins. Haydn Society HS-9034, \$4.98.

▲NONE of these performances is new, exactly. All were brought out some years ago by The Haydn Society, and all were reviewed most enthusiastically. Subsequently the "Italian Classical Symphonists" series (originally a set of six discs) became a valuable collector's item, and deservedly so. The whys and wherefores of its prolonged unavailability need not detain us. It is enough to report that most of the initial release is once

again in the catalogues, and much more economically arranged than was the case previously. HSL-74 contained the Albinoni, the Geminiani-Corelli, and two of the three Sammartini works above. HSL-75 contained a Sammartini cantata not yet re-released. HSL-76 contained cantatas by Pergolesi and Cambini and a Galuppi overture, all still in limbo. HSL-77 contained the Giordani and Valentini concerti, along with the Brunetti C minor Symphony. HSL-78 contained the Viotti double concerto and the other Brunetti symphony. HSL-79 contained the Rosetti concerto and the Boccherini symphony. The present three records, therefore, offer all that the corresponding four of the first set did, plus the Sammartini Oboe Concerto and the Sarti Concertone if my reckoning is not amiss. Also, the sound throughout has been remastered with remarkable results. The music is not uniformly on the masterwork level by any means, but it is without exception delightful. (My special favorite is the Rosetti.) The entire release is warmly recommended.

—J.L.

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**KABALEVSKY**: *Fifteen Children's Pieces*, Op. 27, Book 1; *Ten Children's Pieces*, Op. 27, Book 2; Lenore Engdahl (piano). M-G-M E-3322, \$3.98.

▲FANCIFUL, neo-Schumannnesque, these should find favor with the wide-awake half of American pupils "early thru intermediate", although it would be as ridiculous to grade them as it would the *Kinderscenen* or "easy" Beethoven sonatas. They run a child's-eye gamut from touching to trivial, from breakneck to *plus que lente*, and they are played ingenuously if somewhat down to the toddler set by Miss Engdahl—I would like a subtler touch for those of us no longer in that happy state. M-G-M's piano sound is a bit shallow here, but the music definitely is recommended for children who like cocktails.

—J.B.L.

•

**LISZT**: *Mephisto Waltz*; **RAVEL**: *Bolero*; Vienna State Opera Orchestra

(Continued on page 396)

# The new London 'Kindertotenlieder'

By JACK DIETHER

HERE we have the doubly unexpected association of Mahler-sounds from Vienna with (1) Sir Adrian, who has made one previous Mahler recording in England, and (2) Mme. Flagstad, who has never been more closely identified with this composer than her long adherence to the Wagnerian orbit might suggest. As I have an unbounded admiration for all concerned in this enterprise, I awaited it with festive anticipation. True, Sir Adrian's previous *Songs of a Wayfarer* with Blanche Thebom (now deleted) had been nothing out of the ordinary. But a fine artist learns, and hadn't his 1945 *Song of the Earth* in London (unrecorded) been the best I've heard anywhere? As for Flagstad, I could already hear in my mind both of Mahler's elegies (for a dead love and a dead child) in that incredibly clear, melting voice that told Parsifal of Herzeleide and Siegmund of Valhalla as no other living singer can.

That melting quality of her tones is unimpaired, but alas, the great *Wagnerienne* has prepared an unpleasant surprise for the occasion. One of the chief joys of listening to Flagstad, by virtue of her unfailing and absolute surety of pitch, is her celebrated bell-like attack on the dead center of every note. This I regard, in fact, as the Flagstad trademark *par*

**MAHLER:** *Kindertotenlieder; Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Kirsten Flagstad, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. London 5330, \$4.98.

*Kindertotenlieder* (1901-4):  
Lail (c), Kleinert, Rad, Berlin..... Ur. 7016  
Ferrier (c), Walter, Vienna Ph..... Col. 4980  
Anderson (c), Monteux, San Fr..... RCA 1146  
Schey (br), Otterloo, Hague Ph..... Epic 6001  
Foster (bs-br), Horen, Bamberg..... Vox 9100  
Dieskau (br), Kempe, Berlin Ph..... RCA 6050  
*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (1883-5):  
Metternich (br), Ludwig, Rad, Ber..... Ur. 7016  
Foster (bs-br), Horen, Bamberg..... Vox 9100  
Merriman (m-s), Beinum, Amster..... Epic 6023

*excellence*. But how does she approach Mahler? Inexplicably, with a recurrent scooping upward into the notes, in all nine songs of these two cycles, sometimes quite slowly and deliberately in something more of a deep glide. There have been times when I've concluded that there must be a trick in Mahler which stubbornly resists the mature novitiate. I can recall another occasion on which the *Kindertotenlieder* brought out the least expected in the artist: insecure breath control in the recording of none other than Marian Anderson. This, on the other hand, *must* be deliberate on Flagstad's part. For instance, she scoops in turn each of the five slowly repeated B's in the line "*da muss' ich Abschied nehmen*" (*Wayfarer* song No. 4) with evident relish aforesought. Why? I wish I knew. Whatever the reason, the misprint on the album cover, "*Leider eines fahrenden Gesellen*", is more than symbolic. For me at least, it is more an occasion for *Leid* than *Lied*.

In other respects there is much to praise in Flagstad's *Wayfarer*, but in view of the very serviceable Merriman-Van Beinum (reviewed last October), I cannot give the new one precedence among the female versions. Van Beinum is still ahead of Boult, too; it was he who led the best of all *Wayfarers*, the Eugenia Zareska on English Decca 78s. The male versions will be discussed when Fischer-Dieskau's HMV recording is released.

In the *Kindertotenlieder* there are two added difficulties. Flagstad does not seem to have projected herself very deeply into the more subtilized but none the less intense emotions of this work, and her handling of Mahler's occasionally stressed notes is especially perfunctory—for example, at "*wie sonst mein Töchterlein*" (in No. 3), with its three falling accents on the single word

"*sonst*", which should thus be more than a sweet cadence. To ignore them altogether is a major error, for a strict observance of Mahler's explicit markings shows that through such stresses he achieves his bitterness in the very restraint of agony. Secondly, the whole cycle has been transposed up a minor third to accommodate her voice, with some rather unhappy results. The emotional peaks of the vocal line, above the staff, are quite shrill and penetrating rather than anguished, as are the wind and string parts. A listener unaware of the transposition remarked to me on the "squeaky" solo violin, which could have resulted only from such perversion of Mahler's carefully calculated orchestration. And the recording even falsifies the excellent album notes by Robert Boas (evidently submitted *a priori*, as is usually the unfortunate case), since the tonalities he describes do not apply to this performance. *In diesem Wetter* (No. 5) does not "resolve into a consolatory D major"; the listener will have to be consoled with F, and with that much less warmth in the solo horn's final *Requiem aeternam*. Neither on the English-made record nor the American-made album cover, incidentally, is Mme. Flagstad identified as a soprano or anything else. The credits listed on the opposite page are exactly as given. With one work in the original key and one transposed, I suppose she should be classified here as a Mahler "sopralto".

In the case of the *Kindertotenlieder*, Fischer-Dieskau's sensitive performance is already available from RCA Victor, and is recommended among the current male versions, as the Ferrier-Walter is among the female. Again the best recording of

all, in respect to both singer and conductor, is a deleted 78—the 1932 Polydor by Rehkemper and Horenstein. This surely belongs in some company's "Treasury of Great Recordings". Any takers?

The transposition and all else considered, the Vienna Philharmonic carries London's day. Oddly enough, this is the first time the *Wayfarer* has been recorded by the successors to Mahler's own orchestra, and they are out to welcome him home with honors. The engineering is ultra-realistic; that piercing sound at the beginning of *Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht* (No. 1) is not a high-cycle leak, but a series of resonant strokes on the triangle. The over-all orchestral balance in the *Wayfarer* is not so nearly ideal, however, as in the Zareska 78, which would still show up any of the hi-fi LPs if released in that medium.

Both the final processing and the packaging of the new record leave something to be desired: (1) The positive passion of London (or rather the English parent company that manufactures the discs) for distributing the sides exactly equally, whatever the results to the musical sense and continuity, here exceeds all normal bounds. For the sole reason that the *Wayfarer* is about ten minutes shorter, the twenty-five-minute *Kindertotenlieder* has the climactic *In diesem Wetter* disengaged for the first time and unkindly deposited on the first band of the reverse side. Six previous LPs accommodated this work with entire success on one side, so why such dogged unmusicality? This is the triumph of technical "know-how" over common sense. It is of course wildly possible that the engineer was also carried away by the rather fascinating accidental relationship between the end of the transposed *Kindertotenlieder* and the beginning of the *Wayfarer*: the mediant A of the horns and violas becomes the dominant A of the first clarinet. This happens to be one of Mahler's favorite special juxtapositions (the Fifth Symphony *Rondo* starts just that way), though functionally meaningless and stylistically *non sequitur* here. So again the net result is the creation of a false relationship as well as the dissipation of a true one.

Boult: "a fine artist learns..."



(2) London's annotator writes of the *Kindertotenlieder*: "Paradoxically the musical settings, the work of a man to whom the tragedy was unreal, far surpass the texts in quality, for it cannot be denied that Rückert's poems, albeit written at a time of genuine bereavement, are by no means free from sentimentality." There is considerable truth in this; but it is unfortunate for London that he should happen to have brought it up here, since nothing in the lyrics approaches the excessive sentimentality of the color photography on the album cover. This is quite in the vein of the more maudlin color photography offered lately by RCA, Columbia, Decca, etc., and I hereby invite my fellow reviewers to give more of their attention to this situation. Why should hi-fi releases that are becoming increasingly agreeable to the ear become increasingly offensive to the eye? One is especially appalled by the saccharinity of London's current effort since Vox has given us, for a coupling of the same two works, a fine and sensitive woodcut (artist not credited),

eloquent of the veiled tragedy of the *Kindertotenlieder*. And on the dramatic stage, Antony Tudor's stoically expressionist ballet, *Dark Elegies*, fed by the deepest undercurrents, has justly removed the music of this work even further from that artificial realm of Hollywood preciousness.

In addition to the Boas notes London offers, on a separate sheet, the German texts and a new, splendid English prose translation, also anonymous (perhaps by the same Boas). I should especially like to congratulate this translator for coming up with what I consider the best translation yet of the title *Kindertotenlieder*. The cycle has usually been known in English as *Songs on the Death of Children*, which is extremely awkward and unidiomatic. A few years ago *Time* magazine suggested a less awkward rendering, *Songs for Dead Children*, in the same sense as *Pavane for a Dead Princess*. And now we have the most idiomatic suggestion of all—*Dirges for Children*—which I henceforth intend to employ.

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(Continued from page 393)

conducted by Hermann Scherchen.  
Westminster W-LAB-7059, \$7.50.  
(Bolero)

Koussevitzky, Boston ..... RCA Victor LM-1012

▲ DESPITE the fact that the orchestral version of Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* predated that for the keyboard by nineteen years, it is my opinion that the work fares best in the hands of a pianist. At best, the instrumentation is overly weighty and thick-textured for the thematic material involved. Having only two hands rather than two hundred, a pianist (a great pianist, I mean) can achieve the deftness of mobility and crystal-clear precision that I have never heard in the orchestral version and also can indulge in the numerous written runs and glissandi that any ensemble would be hard pressed to execute. Whatever the version, it is romantic imagination that either sails or sinks this frothy bit of program music. With the unpredictable Scherchen, imagination and animation are in short supply until well nigh the end, when all hell

suddenly breaks loose momentarily. But the rest is rather dull and unexpressive. The tempo set for *Bolero* is too slow for each rhythmic impulse effectively to relate to the next. Hence, even when the instrumentation is increased in quantity and volume the expected excitement just doesn't come off. Inexplicably, however, Scherchen not only fails to build the dynamics to their fullest possibilities, but also decrescendos to an anti-climax in the last few bars. I do not hear the jazz-like slurs asked of the trombones in the score. The Liszt is excellently recorded, the Ravel less so.

—A.K.

MOZART: *Violin Concerto No. 3 in G, K. 216*; HAYDN: *Violin Concerto No. 1 in C*; Isaac Stern (violin) conducting the Columbia Chamber Orchestra, and with the Columbia String Orchestra (Alexander Zakin, cembalo), respectively. Columbia ML-5248, \$3.98.

▲ TO say that Isaac Stern makes mountains out of molehills in the Mozart is stating the case too vehemently: Stern



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NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

is a violinist of great musicality, and certainly not one measure of Mozart's Third Concerto is of molehill stature. But something seems amiss in this performance, and the old adage indicates the direction in which the trouble lies. Stern makes too much of certain figures and phrases which should glide by without calling attention to themselves. In keeping with a somewhat bumptious and outdoorsy concept of the work, particularly on the orchestra's part, he has a tendency to land with both feet on the strong beat and belabor too much the rhythmic ideas which Mozart puts forth not as passing thoughts, exactly, but as units which are part of a larger whole. A comparison with Kogan's fluid and sympathetic performance with the Philharmonia (on Angel) brings this complaint into sharper focus than words can. It brings to mind, too, the peculiar paradox of Stern's efforts with the Columbia Chamber Orchestra: while as soloist he does too much with his own part, as conductor he leads the orchestra through a rather bald and cocky performance which does Mozart too little justice

**PARSI:** *Divertimento del Sur; Sonata in G*; respectively members of the Casals Festival Orchestra conducted by Milton Katims and Jesús María Sanromá (piano). Cook 1061, \$4.98.

▲THE Puerto Rican contemporary Hector Campos Parsi may be a Boulangier product, but his pianistic allegiance is to Hindemith, with a nod to Ravel. The



Sanromá: "masterful presentation"

and minimizes the seriousness of the work. The Haydn Concerto in C (previously recorded by Stern) is a pleasant work to have around, not only as a souvenir of lesser-known Haydn, but also because of its beautiful and rather sad slow movement for the violin alone. It was, presumably, written for Haydn's right-hand fiddler at Eszterházy, the much-mentioned Tomasini, and it is grateful for the violin and by no means easy going. The recorded sound of both performances is a little edgy but not disturbingly so. However, Columbia should decide on the correct spelling of its prominent violinist's name. —S.F.

●  
**MOZART:** *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat, K. 364; BENJAMIN:* *Romantic Fantasy*; Jascha Heifetz (violin), William Primrose (viola); Orchestra conducted by Izler Solomon. RCA Victor LM-2149, \$4.98.

The Fuchsces ..... Decca DL-9596

▲THIS may well be the definitive statement of the Mozart. Heifetz and Primrose play with singleness of purpose and with flawless precision. Their interpre-

*Divertimento* is just as clearly Stravinskian in line and color; pages of it vividly recall the latter's ballet scores of the forties. Whether or not this namesake of the most celebrated musical Puertorriqueño of them all (see the May, 1957 issue, page 124) will ever contain his influences is moot. Say for his writing at this point that it represents an artful consolidation of the best available resources, its originality being limited to the winning *savoir faire* of the thievery. The fleeting reverisons to Carib sensuousness are inundated by so much highly sophisticated eclecticism, but they are there. Both works are structurally strong, whatever their esthetic antecedents. These first recorded performances are excellent, and Sanromá is due special praise for his masterful presentation of the very difficult Sonata. Not that this should surprise anyone; few pianists alive are so little fazed by technical challenges. Cook's recording is a miracle of presence. In sum, a highly recommended release. —J.L.

tation is both warm (who said Heifetz was cold?) and profound. To this taste, nothing more could be asked. The Benjamin proves to be a work of considerable ingenuity and expressiveness, certainly worthy of the artistry expended on it. Solomon's backgrounds are skillfully contrived. There is a slight imbalance to the recording in that the solo instruments have been miked too far forward, so that the tones of both tend to reproduce "bigger than life", and with a slight electronic sheen. The Fuchses were recorded in correct proportion, but not so recently. —A.K.

**L. MOZART:** *Musikalische Schlittenfahrt; Cassatio ex G*; Bach Orchestra of Berlin conducted by Carl Gorvin. Decca Archive ARC-3093, \$5.98.

▲ PERHAPS the children would appreciate these essays in juvenilia, but neither contains an iota of adult delectation. The first, written for "orchestra and sleigh bells", describes an interminable ride through the Swabian countryside. The *Cassatio* offers a sort of hi-fi adventure for kiddies' instruments. The program annotator contributes an absurd eulogy of the martinetish Mozart *père*.

—J.L.

**R. STRAUSS:** *Suite from "Der Rosenkavalier"; Don Juan*; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by William Steinberg. Capitol PAO-8423, \$4.98.

▲ YET another *Don Juan*, but it is a carefully wrought one, in a class with all save Toscanini's and Walter's. The over-side, however, is in a class by itself. Steinberg has contrived an entirely new suite—using in turn the Introductions to Acts I and II, the Arrival of the Rose-Cavalier, Presentation of the Rose, Pantomime, and Waltzes from Act II, the *Terzett*, Duet, *Dénouement*, and Grand Waltz from Act III, and a Coda—and it is a simply marvelous distillation of the full score. It is, I think, easily the best orchestral abridgement of them all, and certainly it is the most generous in its allusions. Steinberg's performance is loving, the Philharmonians responsive in kind. The engineering is generally excellent throughout. —J.L.



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## After Corelli, the less subtle Tartini

**TARTINI:** *Concertos for Violin and String Orchestra, Op. 2; I Musici Virtuosi di Milano conducted by Dean Eckertsen. Vox de luxe set DL-373, six sides, \$19.50.*

▲ THERE is perhaps no urgent reason for comparing Corelli and Tartini, born thirty-nine years apart, except that the latter carried on the great Italian tradition of the violinist-composer which the former had initiated; both were, in their respective fashions, masters of string-writing; and both have been given the red carpet treatment by Vox in the form of handsome packaging jobs with exhaustive notes by Joseph Braunstein. The Corelli set was discussed in the January issue (page 207). One may naturally be curious as to whether the Tartini matches it in quality.

It is my personal feeling, to begin with, that Tartini's music is less interesting—or rather, that the six concertos of Op. 2 do not have as much to offer as, say, the trio sonatas or the concerti grossi of Corelli. Tartini is less subtle. He turns fewer corners into unexpected harmonies, and more rarely than Corelli molds one

of those slow melodies which seem to be what the violin was born for. He has other things on his mind: namely, some formidable workouts for the solo instrument, ranging from taxing double-stops and large leaps to the suggesting of two distinct voices—the kind of violin writing which Bach had carried farther a few years before.

There are two pitfalls which may trap us, however, in listening to Tartini's solo string parts today. For one thing, the ornamentation on which they depended (left up to the performer, largely) is apt to sound naive to us. No matter how sympathetic we may be with the custom of those times, the thrilling embellishments of the *Adagio* of Concerto No. 1, or the endless turns in the first movement of No. 6 may pall. For another, the pretty steadfast repetition of subject matter by both the tutti and the solo allows for some wandering of attention.

But such reservations seem a bit unsportsmanlike. After all, Tartini is Tartini and we may take him or leave him. Given such an ultimatum, I will take him, for there are many respects of the six concertos to counterbalance the faint praise bestowed on those two or three points. When he unleashes the four voice-lines in a fugal exposition, as he does at the opening of No. 2, the vitality is unmistakable and the effect gripping. When he whittles down a slow movement to the barest instrumentation (in the middle movements of No. 2 and No. 6 the solo is accompanied only by two violins and continuo) he achieves a reflective and tender quality of the most delicate sort.

I Musici Virtuosi di Milano, under Dean Eckertsen, do a praiseworthy job. If they are not so brilliant an aggregation as one or two of their more familiar compatriot ensembles, they nevertheless are stylistically accurate and convincing, as we would expect from a group conducted by Eckertsen. He has been a pioneer in recording the baroque literature. Renato Biffoli's tone is more wiry than full, but the trying solos hold no terrors for him.

—S.F.



## Operatic recitals from all over

**An Evening at the Lyric Opera of Chicago:** "Samson et Dalila"—*Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix* (Saint-Saëns); "Eugene Onegin"—Letter Scene (Tchaikovsky); "Cavalleria Rusticana"—*Voi lo sapete* (Mascagni); "Nozze di Figaro"—*Voi che sapete* (Mozart); "Andrea Chenier"—*Nemico della patria* (Gordano); "Mefistofele"—*L'altra notte in fondo al mare* (Boito); "Gioconda"—*L'amo come il fulgor del creato* (Ponchielli); Renata Tebaldi (soprano); Giulietta Simionato (mezzo-soprano); Ettore Bastianini (baritone); Lyric Theater Orchestra conducted by Georg Solti. London X-5320, \$4.98.

▲THIS is a portion of a concert given in Chicago by members of the Lyric Opera Company, complete with applause. Of the two ladies Tebaldi shows up the more impressively, partly because of the repertory she sings. Simionato does the "Samson" air in Italian, which is always a strike against it, compounding the difficulty of putting the suave music over by her own very Italianate style. Hers is not the sensuous, insinuating voice one associates with Dalila. To crown it all, perhaps as a direct result of what I have already mentioned, her performance is rather dull and listless. She comes into her own, of course, in *Voi lo sapete*, but I do not find her very satisfactory in the Mozart. Here her vibrato is quite out of place. Tebaldi is very much alive in the "Onegin" scene, and her voice has never sounded better. This singing has style, an admirable line and a sense of the drama. She is effective again in *L'altra notte*, despite a rather leisurely tempo. Bastianini gives generously with his splendidly virile voice in the "Andrea Chenier" monologue and this of course is just what the music needs. The two ladies have it magnificently hot and heavy in the "Gioconda" duet, which is as right as it could be to finish such a program.

—P.L.M.

**Operatic Recital:** "L'Elisir d'Amore"—*Una furtiva lagrima* (Donizetti); "Tosca"—*Recondita armonia*; *E lucevan le stelle* (Puccini); "Trovatore"—*Ah! si, ben mio*; "Rigoletto"—*Ella mi fu rapita*; *Parmi veder le lagrime* (Verdi); "Eugen Onegin"—*Wohin seid ihr entschwunden?* (Tchaikovsky); "Die Entführung aus dem Serail"—*Hier soll ich dich denn sehen; Wenn der Freude Tränen fliessen*; "Die Zauberflöte"—*Wie stark ist nicht dein Zauberton*; "Così Fan Tutte"—*Der Odem der Liebe*; "Die Entführung aus dem Serail"—*Konstanze . . . O wie ängstlich* (Mozart); Anton Dermota (tenor); Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Rother. London/Telefunken LGX-66048, \$4.98.

▲DERMOTA'S success as a recording artist has been principally gained in Mozartian roles. This point is impressively driven home by the contrast between the two sides of this disc. Side 1 is decidedly uneven. Most of the singer's weaknesses are shown up in the very first number. Since he knows that *Una furtiva lagrima* is an intimate aria, he quite rightly conceives it mostly in *mezza voce*. However, his voice has a tendency to spread when he cuts it down to this level, and the results in this particular aria are a little untidy. This is emphasized by a considerable amount of juggling with his vocal registers. Furthermore, he here seems determined to outemotionalize the Italians, and he nearly succeeds. Finally, the rhythmic pulse of his singing is never its strongest point, and Donizetti's touching melody doesn't quite get the chance it needs. But the soft beginning of *Recondita armonia* is a refreshing change from the robust treatment usually accorded this number, and as Puccini's melody surges to its climax we hear how well Dermota can sound at full voice. Neither this nor the second "Tosca" aria is overdone. But the Verdi pieces in German are less happy. The "Eugen Onegin" gets a good Germanic performance. As indicated above, the singer is more at home in the Mozart arias, and though he is not above some of my criticisms on this side of the disc, it is here we realize why Dermota has become popular. The ac-

companying orchestra is no more than adequate. —P.L.M.

**Operatic Recital:** "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"—Una voce poco fa (Rossini); "Don Carlos"—O don fatale (Verdi); "I Capuletti ed i Montecchi"—Deh! tu bell'anima (Bellini), "La Cenerentola"—Nacqui all'afano; Non più mesta (Rossini); "Samson et Dalila"—Prin-temps qui commence (Saint-Saëns); "Mignon"—Connais-tu le pays? (Thom- as); "Werther"—Air de la lettre (Massen- et); "Carmen"—Habanera (Bizet); Giulietta Simionato (mezzo-soprano) with Orchestra of Academia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, conducted by Franco Chione and Fernando Previtali. London LL-1580, \$3.98.

▲THE first side of this disc is a reissue of material formerly available on a ten-inch disc. Designed, no doubt, to dem-

onstrate Simionato's versatility, it shows her in her two most famous Rossini roles—both in comedies—in one of the most demanding of dramatic mezzo arias, and in an example of pure old-fashioned *legato*. The "Barber" and "Cenerentola" airs, of course, need no praise. She is not quite so triumphant in the "Don Carlos" (for she cannot conceal the fact that it is difficult) but she does very well by the Bellini. The French program overdisc is another story. She pronounces the language better than most Italians, but she does not meet the music quite on its own terms. She does not have the finely chiseled vocal line for the sinuous "Samson" aria—without which it is tiresome—nor is her "Mignon" the soul of neatness. The "Werther" scene is better, for here Simionato can be dramatic and sing out in full voice. The *Habanera* performance is rather plodding. —P.L.M.

### A silver anniversary memento from IRCC

**I.R.C.C. Souvenirs of Opera (Third Series):** "Adriana Lecouvreur"—Io son l'umile ancilla (Cilea); Angelica Pandolfini (soprano). "Simon Boccanegra"—Il lacerato spirto (Verdi); Giovanni Gravina (basso). "Siberia"—O bella mia (Giordano); Giuseppe de Luca (baritone); Gaetano Pini-Corsi (tenor); Oreste Gennari (tenor); Vittorio Pozzi-Camolla (baritone). "Siberia"—No! Se un pensier torture; Rosina Storchio (soprano). "Siberia"—Quest' orgoglio non a noi; Rosina Storchio (soprano); Giuseppe de Luca (baritone). "Siberia"—Orride steppel; Giovanni Zenatello (tenor). "Siberia"—No, sul mio onore; Giovanni Zenatello (tenor). "Siberia"—E qui con te il mio destin; Rosina Storchio (soprano); Giovanni Zenatello (tenor). "Siberia"—Non odi là il martir; Rosina Storchio (soprano). "Siberia"—La connobbi quand' era fanciulla; Giuseppe de Luca (baritone). "Sigurd"—Sigurd, les dieux dans leurs clémence (Reyer); Rose Caron (soprano). "Le Comte Ory"—Veiller sans cesse craindre (Rossini); Juste Nivette (basso). "Les Diamants de la Cou-

ronne"—Ah! je veux briser ma chaîne (Auber); José Grayvill (soprano). International Record Collectors Club L-7013 (318 Reservoir Ave., Bridgeport 6, Conn.) ten-inch, \$4 plus postage (.50; .75 west of the Mississippi).

▲EXCEPT for the Gravina, Nivette, and Grayvill recordings, these are all "creators'" performances, with accent on "Siberia". Giordano's *verismo* score is obviously a hot and passionate one, and the famous artists all give it plenty of their personal fire. But one wonders if this particular thriller could ever again be revived. The Pandolfini selection is very rare, and happily it sounds well. Obviously the lady, whose father was Amonasro in the first performance of "Aida" in Italy, was a well-schooled singer with a fine voice. I also found the Rose Caron selection fascinating, though certainly there was more to the voice than is caught in this reproduction. The quality as I get it reminds me of the rich Litvinne tone. Nivette is capital in his *buffo* piece, and José Grayvill turns in a strikingly brilliant show-piece. The disc is IRCC's twenty-fifth anniversary issue. —P.L.M.



Corena: "a legitimate vocalist"

**Operatic Arias for Bass, Vol. 2:** "La Cenerentola"—"Miei rampolli femminini"; "L'Italiana in Algeri"—"Ho un gran peso sulla testa (Rossini); "Il Matrimonio segreto"—"Udite, tutti, udite (Cinna-rosa); "La Cenerentola"—"Sia qualunque delle figlie (Rossini); "Griselidis"—"Jusqu' ici, sans dangers (Massenet); "Le Caid"—"Le tambour-major tout galonne d'or (Thomas); *Le Pas d'armes du Roi Jean* (Saint-Saëns); "Philemon et Baucis"—"Au bruit des lourds marteaux (Gounod); "La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein"—"Piff-paff-puff (Offenbach); Fernando Corena (basso) with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Orchestra conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni and Suisse Romande Orchestra conducted by James Walker. London LL-1636, \$3.98.

▲CORENA's pre-eminence among buffo singers today hardly can be questioned. The reason for this is that he is a legitimate vocalist and uses honorable means to produce his humor. He can, if he chooses, sing quite seriously. The first side of this disc presents him in a familiar light. But magnificent as his patter is in the Rossini numbers, this is really no more than we expect of him. The novelty comes in the French numbers overdisc. Although I cannot quite agree with the annotator that Corena is equally at home in French and Italian (I am not, of course, disputing his conversational abilities) his interpretations never lack interest. In the more sustained portions of the "Griselidis" air he mouths his words a bit, but his sense of style never deserts him. In the florid piece from "Le Caid", identified for old-time collectors with the art of Pol Plançon, Corena takes the coloratura securely but gently; he does not dazzle as his great predecessor did. And he makes no attempt to trill. The Saint-Saëns, of course, really is out of place on an opera program; it is a ballad describing a knightly tourney; and a quite delightful one. To my taste the "Philemon et Baucis" number is a little too jaunty here: this is hardly the suspicious, resentful Vulcan. But to cap all, the Offenbach is given with great gusto. The program certainly adds cubits to Corena's already imposing stature. —P.L.M.

**Alfredo Kraus of Spain:** *Granada* (Lara); *Estrellita* (Ponce); *La picara molinera* (Luna); *Valencia* (Padilla); *Los Gavilanes* (Guerrera); *Amapola* (Lacalle); *Ay, ay, ay* (Perez-Freire); *Princesita* (Padilla); *La Alegria del Batallon* (Serrano); *El Trust de los Tenores* (Serrano); *Alma de Dios* (Serrano); *Doña Francisquita* (Vives); Alfredo Kraus (tenor) with Orquesta de Camera de Madrid conducted by José Luis Lloret; Daniel Montorio, musical supervisor. Montilla FM-111, \$4.98.

▲KRAUS is advertised as "the greatest Spanish tenor since Miguel Fleta", and not without some justice, for the quality of his voice is not too far from that of his

famous predecessor. However, as the writer of the jacket notes asserts, "it is apparent that there is not the least attempt to emulate famous voices of yesteryear." Certainly the style is not the style of Miguel Fleta. It is more straightforward, more outgoing. Kraus can throw out a high D flat, which he does in *La picara molinera*, and he can make a diminuendo (if not so smooth a one as Fleta's) on the final note of *Ay, ay, ay*. Fleta played around a great deal more with the latter song, and Schipa (a greater artist if less endowed with sheer voice) made it more intimate. Schipa also had a way with *Princesita* which is not Kraus' way.

—P.L.M.

# The art of Rachmaninoff

By RAFAEL KAMMERER

THIS recording should find a welcome place in every pianist's library. Since it is listed on the jacket as "Volume I", another must be in the offing, which is also welcome news. Considering the unique role that Rachmaninoff played in the hierarchy of great pianists, plus the fact that he was one of the most, if not the most, 'phonogenic' of all pianists, every recording he ever made is worthy of preservation. Some are perhaps more so than others, but whether commercially feasible or not, each and every one should, in one form or another, be made continuously available—the acousticals no less than the electricals. For Rachmaninoff's playing on records is in many ways more representative of his pianistic art at its best than it often was in the flesh.

On this disc we have two of his greatest interpretations. The *Carnival* was recorded on April 12th, 1929, and the Sonata just a year later. Rachmaninoff was then at the height of his pianistic powers. The *Carnival* was reissued a few years ago on two sides of ten-inch LP

(LCT-12) as part of RCA Victor's "Treasury of Immortal Performances" series. For one reason or another it did not remain in the catalogue very long. So far as I know, this is the first transfer of the Sonata to LP. Both performances were, of course, originally recorded at 78 rpm. On these reissues the playing is the thing that captivates the attention, for the "sound" leaves something to be desired.

Rachmaninoff, of course, could not play anything without impressing it with his own distinctive stamp, and yet in the *Carnival* he gives us more Schumann (and what Schumann!) than Rachmaninoff. Besides being by turns rhapsodic, tender, and poetic, diabolically virtuosic, and meltingly singing, Rachmaninoff's playing is wonderfully communicative.

The Sonata, on the other hand, is cast in a heroic mold and surcharged with the Rachmaninoff touch. A bold brilliance dominates the first movement and a fleet-fingered scintillation the *Scherzo*. The "Funeral March" he plays as Anton Rubinstein used to play it—like a procession coming from afar, passing by, and receding in the distance. The D flat cantilena section is beautifully sung on the keyboard in a cool, dispassionate way. His playing of the final *Presto* is simply beyond description and unlike anything heard from other pianists. How the man ever figured out that fantastic array of

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)



**The Art of Rachmaninoff:** *Carnival*, Op. 9 (Schumann); *Sonata in B flat minor*, Op. 35 (Chopin); Sergei Rachmaninoff (piano). RCA Victor Camden CAL-396, \$1.98.

accentuations—and, once figured out, how he kept them in his head and got his fingers to execute them—is, I suppose, one of the secrets of genius.

What he does with those few enigmatic notes designated "Sphinxes" in the *Carnival*, incidentally, is another master-stroke—he simply creates a cosmos out of a musical molehill.

So that even if, for some reason, you happen to loathe the *Carnival* and/or the *Sonata*, this record is worth getting for Rachmaninoff's playing. You'll never get so good a bargain again until RCA comes out with "The Art of Rachmaninoff", Volume II.

Just what Volume II will bring—if and when it comes—arouses my curiosity. Will it, for instance, contain that spectacularly virtuosic early electrical recording of the Strauss-Tausig *Man lebt nur einmal* (6636), where the runs in the treble glitter like star-studded icicles and the melodies literally swoon in their intoxicating rhythms? And will the pianist's matchless performances of his own arrangements of Kreisler's *Liebesleid* (74723) and *Liebesfreud* (11-8728-B) be included? The former is a particularly fine-sounding acoustical and the latter one of the most brilliant electrics. Another acoustical well worth reviving would be the Dohnányi Capriccio in F minor, originally issued on a single-faced ten-inch disc (66059) and now a rare collector's item.

In the light of RCA Victor's and HMV's recent parting of the ways, it is perhaps too much to hope that Rachmaninoff's recordings of Liszt's *Gnomenreigen* (HMV I.R. 270) and his own version of the *Scherzo* from Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" ("Midsummer Madness" might be a better title for this demonic performance) on HMV D.B. 3146 might be included. They are superb examples of Rachmaninoff's art as a pianist and, moreover, of the art of capturing a true piano sound on records. There are, of course, many other fine examples of Rachmaninoff's playing gathering dust in the Victor vaults, not to mention the recordings he left of his own works. Perhaps, in time, RCA Victor (via Camden) will see fit to release them all.

## From Minneapolis

**Organ Miscellany.** *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* (The "Great"); *Chorale Prelude, "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland"* (J.S.Bach); *Meditation on "Ave Maris Stella"* (Harvey Grace); *Scherzetto and Carillon* (Louis Vierne); *Hymn based on Beethoven's "Ode to Joy"*. Rupert Sircom at the organ of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis. Available only from the Paul A. Schmitt Music Company, 88 South Tenth Street, Minneapolis 3, Minn. \$5.

▲ADMIRERS of the romantic organ will find this a worth-while disc not only for Sircom's playing but also for the sound of the instrument itself, which ranks among the country's finest. A large four-manual, it was originally built by the Kimball Organ Company in 1927, and recently has been overhauled and enlarged. It contains a variety of beautiful solo stops and a magnificent ensemble. Sircom has been musical director and organist at Westminster Presbyterian Church, one of the largest and most influential in the Northwest, since 1930. He is thoroughly at home on this instrument and demonstrates its tonal qualities to advantage. His Bach playing may not entirely satisfy the purists, but he gives the Prelude and Fugue a noble and dignified performance. The Fugue is built up to a tremendous and thrilling climax. A pupil of the late Lynwood Farnam, Sircom is one of the few disciples of that master who have not gone completely "baroque". A musician of solid attainments rather than a virtuoso, he has a keen, Farnam-like registrational sense and an ear for organistic color. This is most apparent in his playing of the *Scherzetto* from Vierne's First Symphony and the Harvey Grace *Meditation*. In the latter, he gets a subtle variety of shading, without disturbing the basic tonal color, in a way that recalls Farnam's playing of this piece. The engineers did a superb job—without compensating—and the jacket contains a handsome portrait of Sircom at the console.

—Rafael Kammerer

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *Macmillan's new 'critical history' of Russian music*

By ALEXANDER KIPNIS

IT GAVE ME great pleasure to read Richard Anthony Leonard's book, *A History of Russian Music*.\* It not only contains a wealth of historical information about the music and the composers of Russia, but also it gives the reader a glimpse into the history of Russia from other points of view.

Among great Russian composers, the name of Modest Mussorgsky towers above all others. This would be the opinion of musicians; however, I believe that the average music lover would say Tchaikovsky is his favorite.

Mr. Leonard loves both the aforementioned composers. As a matter of fact, he loves *all* Russian composers. It is remarkable with what devotion he has entered into their personalities and individual characteristics, most especially the famous "Five". And of the "Five" he has singled out Mussorgsky. Deservedly so! This composer truly merits the title of "genius". But then, many Russian composers are called geniuses by Mr. Leonard: Glinka, Borodin, Stravinsky, etc. And if *all* these composers are geniuses, then what shall one call such stars of the first magnitude as Mozart and Beethoven?

The author has penetrated particularly into the life of Mussorgsky. I remember how impressed I was when the opportunity of seeing a copy of the original manuscript of his song, *A Little Star*, presented itself to me. In one corner of this copy was written the following:

\* New York: Macmillan; 395 pp., \$6.

"This song has been started at 2 o'clock in the morning in 18—. It was finished at 5 o'clock in the morning two days later."

In another corner:

"To this song there is also an orchestration available by the composer."

And in another corner:

"My first attempt to write orchestration."

Mr. Leonard seems to think that Mussorgsky's compositions should not have been changed or reorchestrated. It is true that one should not change the work of a master such as Mozart or Beethoven, Schubert or Brahms, to name only a few, but one must not forget that Mussorgsky was an auto-didact who had not studied enough harmony or counterpoint. Some of his songs have no beginning, while others have no ending. His ideas are those of a master; however, there are no finishing touches. Sometimes they are like unbelievably tremendous canvases without frames.

Thinking of Mussorgsky's inventiveness brings to my mind a gathering in New York City at which some important composers, conductors, and other musicians were present. A question arose as to whether or not Johann Strauss, the waltz king, whose musical education was only superficial, would have been able to create those heavenly melodies if he had been thoroughly schooled in the intricacies of musical composition, counterpoint, etc. The majority present agreed that technical mastery would not have enabled him to create such melodies. I wonder if this might not possibly apply to Mussorgsky.

Many times one hears indignant voices protesting against the changes in the harmonization and reinstrumentation of "Boris Godunov". I believe that where-

*The guest book reviewer this month is himself an authority on Russian music, to put it as modestly as possible. The new RCA Camden anthology of his famous Russian opera interpretations will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.*



The reviewer as Boris

ever "*Boris*" failed, it was because it was given in the so-called "original" version, and whenever Rimsky-Korsakov's version was used, "*Boris*" was a sensation. I sang excerpts from this opera in the "original" version, in Shostakovich's instrumentation, which was closely based on the Mussorgsky original, and also in Rimsky-Korsakov's version. The difference was monumental! For instance, in the original key of the monologue, "I have attained the highest power . . .", transposing the *adagio* from G flat to C flat resulted in an outstanding improvement because the outcry of Boris on G flat, "Horrible is the verdict of my criminal's soul", brings out all of the horror and anguish of the sick czar.

Mr. Leonard's touching chapter about Tchaikovsky speaks about the opera "*Eugen Onegin*", which was a failure almost everywhere outside Russia. To this I make the following statement. I have seen "*Eugen Onegin*" presented in a leading opera house in Berlin under the leadership of an eminent conductor who is very popular in the United States, and the performance was a failure because the stage director did not know anything about "*Eugen Onegin*". Lensky acted like Max in "*Freischütz*"; Onegin behaved like Telramund in "*Lohengrin*"; and Germin sang like Pogner in "*Meistersinger*". Only

Tatiana was wonderful; this singer was Maria Ivogün.

"*Onegin*" needs not only a great conductor but also an outstanding stage director. Lensky is a poet from his first step on the stage until the duel; he should remain a poet at all times. All of the characters by Pushkin are so different from other operatic figures that without being a Russian, or at least having the proper guidance, one cannot bring these characters to life. This should explain why "*Eugen Onegin*" is not a success outside Russia.

In the first chapter of his book Mr. Leonard writes:

"There have been not one but two great ages in Russian music. The first began with the introduction of Christianity to Russia late in the tenth century, and the bringing of the Byzantine chant of the Eastern Church into the pagan land. . .

"The second age did not begin until centuries later, after the secular music of Western Europe at last seeped into Russia through the medium of the theatre—the drama of the West and Italian opera."

It is very strange to read this without asking: "Where was Russian folk music? Where did Russian folk music come from?" This, I think, was the strongest source of Russian music from Glinka, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov through Stravinsky, and others. The folk songs rang through their creations like a vital stream giving life to their works.

Mr. Leonard, as the author, is evaluating the music of the composers and is telling the reader what to think of the quality of the compositions. I believe that a historian should leave critical judgment to the critic or to the intelligent reader and not try to influence him too much.

Nevertheless, any reader of this book will profit greatly. Some details are drawn out in places, like the stories of the different librettos, details on keys, and so forth, tending to make the book somewhat long. Still, the end result is very gratifying.

# The month's jazz

By MARTIN WILLIAMS

**Bone and Beri:** Curtis Fuller and Tate Houston. Blue Note 1572, \$4.98.

▲THIS label's praiseworthy devotion to young talents continues—and continues to make certain problems for the reviewer. The combination of instruments indicated in the title makes an interesting and effective sonority, especially on Fuller's blues *Algonguin*. My March remarks on Fuller apply. Houston already has a firm, emotionally strong, blues-based voice, and the fast *Pick-Up* gives him and his monster of a horn less trouble than one might expect.

●  
**Dave Digs Disney:** The Dave Brubeck Quartet. Columbia CL-1059, \$3.98.

▲WHAT we hear in Brubeck, I think, is essentially a "personality act". That he uses the devices of jazz (more of them all the time and, under the encouragement of his new drummer, Joe Morello, with more swing) therefore doesn't matter too much. The work of his altoist Paul Desmond sounds like real music and not a musical vehicle for something else, but in this context it's sometimes rather a task to decide about that. The title means that the six tunes come from Disney movies. Or is there a subtler point involved?

●  
**Lee Konitz** with the Gerry Mulligan Quartet. World Pacific PJM-406, \$4.98.

▲MULLIGAN contributed to the definitive "cool" jazz records (Miles Davis, Capitol T-762) both as baritone saxophonist and composer-arranger. In the early fifties the piano-less quartet he led in Los Angeles was very successful and, more than any other single contribution, established the presence of a West Coast "cool" movement. These performances were taped in 1953 in a night club with

altoist Konitz joining Mulligan's group. Mulligan's has been called a music of form with very limited content, and, since Konitz seems to set almost "classic" formal standards for himself as an improviser, we need to judge him accordingly. But the distinction between form and content is ultimately a critic's fiction, and I confess that I frequently feel a lack of concentration and depth in the recordings of both of these men. However, if one compares the work of each of them with that of their many stylistic followers and imitators, he will not only see the difference between authentic talent and derivative hack-work, but also will feel strongly that there is a good deal of size and depth in each of them that has not usually found its way into their playing—and there is a fine *Lady Be Good* here that will help confirm that feeling.

●  
**Dial J. J. 5:** The J. J. Johnson Quintet. Columbia CL-1084, \$3.98.

▲DESPITE some very effective polyphony here and there, this is another recital done largely in Johnson's Lord Chatterley manner. But as most of his work on "First Place" (Columbia CL-1030) and on such things as Sonny Rollins' recent Blue Note 1558 have happily shown, it is a manner, and no permanent disability is involved.

●  
**Presenting Red Mitchell.** Contemporary C-3538, \$4.98.

▲WITH a group like this quartet and the one led by Curtis Counce, it is more than evident to me that a "hard" school is operating in California. With the kind of imaginative virtuosity, power, and warmth that Mitchell's bass playing constantly shows, it is also clear that Charlie

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Tatum: "prodigious harmonic imagination"

**Art Tatum and Buddy de Franco.** Verve MGV-8229, \$4.98.

**Art Tatum and Benny Carter.** Verve MGV-8227, \$4.98.

**Art Tatum and Ben Webster.** Verve MGV-8220, \$4.98.

▲THE late Art Tatum is a problematical figure. The man with nothing but patronizing feelings toward jazz will admire him for astonishing technical resources and, since these are largely those of "Western" piano technique, they are acceptable to such a man. And frequently jazz musi-

cians will admire (or envy) him for the same reasons. On the other hand, one jazz critic has said that Tatum knew hardly anything about true improvisation and merely decorated a line the way any good cocktail pianist can do. Certainly one finds that Tatum was a man of very limited melodic invention (and Teddy Wilson's work makes an excellent point of comparison to his in this respect), yet one finds things like the excellent second chorus of *Gone with the Wind* on the Webster set that not only seem to be exceptions but are so firmly done that they make one wonder why this kind of thing didn't happen all the time in his work. And no one could doubt his prodigious harmonic imagination. The first word that comes up in any discussion of De Franco's clarinet is usually "facility", and since, for me, the description might very well stop there, you may guess that I think the first of these records is the most thoroughly pleasant set of almost innocuously played tunes in many years. Included in the meeting with a strangely subdued and occasionally schmaltzy Benny Carter is an ingenious blues on which Tatum wittily, tantalizingly introduces one motif after another, obliquely pulling away from each into the next, until he has covered almost the entire basic vocabulary of that form. The meeting with Webster seems to me the best, and Webster is an excellent foil to Tatum not only for his direct though tender virility but also for evidence that his could be one of the great melodic imaginations.

Mingus has a Western rival. But if sexist flutist James Clay is really "laying the next step in jazz", as the notes suggest, he is doing it within terms of current "tough tenor" playing (modified by Lucky Thompson) that are highly conventional (if not downright formalized), it seems to me. Not that he can't play that manner very effectively—he does on *Sander* and *Check to Cheek*. Pianist Lorraine Geller doesn't seem to me to know this way of playing very well.

**John Coltrane with the Red Garland Trio.** Prestige 7123, \$4.98.

▲FOR a gently co-operative accompaniment, pianist Red Garland has few rivals, and the degree of interplay between him and drummer "Philly Joe" Jones is wonderful to hear. But as a soloist he is for me frequently fatuous and his efforts to base internal structure on one or two cocktail-isms very transparent. But this is a frequently exciting record and Coltrane's best LP yet, on the whole. It gives some evidence (especially on *You*

*Leave Me Breathless*) that he may learn to channel his talent, get rid of some of those stock motifs, and arrive at a more coherent approach to improvisation—but not that he has done it yet. All this energy, basic originality, constantly improving musicianship, those arresting blues...

•

**Texas! U.S.A.: The Rampart Street Paraders.** Columbia CL-1061, \$3.98.

▲MOST of this seems sheer hokum, harmless in itself but, by implication, a debasement of some of the greatest stylistic achievements in jazz. Most of the musicians present seemed to have involved themselves only superficially, which was wise on their part. Surely Eddie Miller, Abe Lincoln, and others can be put to better use.

•

**The Horn's Full:** Jack Montrose and All-Stars. Victor LPM-1572, \$3.98.

▲SOME capable men were involved but most of what they produced sounds coy, contrived, tricky, or all three.

(Continued from page 379)

known in Europe as "the" specialist in twelve-tone music, it is less known that in this case he replaced at very short notice Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, who had fallen ill. In fact, Rosbaud learned the difficult score in one week. It is thus almost inevitable that some mistakes appear here and there. In the involved writing for the choruses (who sometimes have eight different lines) every voice is not always clear. In sum, however, the performance appears to me almost miracu-

lous in over-all design and precision. The role of Moses is marvelously spoken by Hans Herbert Fiedler, and that of Aaron is very well sung by Helmut Krebs. The role of a Young Girl is efficiently interpreted by Ilona Steingruber. As to the Four Naked Virgins, they sing their extended passage in the prescribed manner and I hope that they would look as beautiful in the onstage state demanded by Schönberg. Praise must be given the Columbia engineers, who have done a virtually perfect job of editing. Having heard the original broadcast of the performance, I can say that there is a vast improvement in the sound of this recording.

Act II, Scene II (The Golden Calf)



A full orchestral score of "Moses und Aron" is not available, although reportedly in preparation. Meanwhile the interested are referred to the Schott piano-vocal score, which is distributed in the United States by Associated Music Publishers. The list price is \$18. Copies may be ordered through this magazine, as may any score in print.

## READERS' RECORD EXCHANGE & MART

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